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CAPITOL SPOTLIGHT
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"LEBANON: What Next?"

I am recording these thoughts two days after the terrorist attack on the American Marines' installation at the Beirut airport. A confused, angry, and broken-hearted nation anxiously awaits a major address by President Reagan. At this time, the names of only twelve dead Marines have been released. Thousands of anxious relatives, friends, and Marine buddies wait in dread for additional bodies to be identified.

Less than a month ago, Congress voted to give the President eighteen months in which to conduct American policy in Lebanon with a free hand. I spoke out strongly against that resolution when it was debated! I voted against it with deep conviction that I was doing the right thing. I had no prophetic vision. I did not know that in a few weeks America would be reeling from the biggest military disaster since the war in Vietnam. I felt then, as I do now, that the Reagan Administration's policy in Lebanon simply does not make sense.

I see no connection between the deployment of 1,600 Marines in an ostensibly noncombative role, and the grandiose dreams the President has for Lebanon. I do not quarrel with those dreams. I believe the vast majority of Members of Congress and the vast majority of Americans would like to see a peaceful, unified Lebanon. We wish Lebanon were ruled by a central government with effective sovereignty over all its territory. The belief that our Marines and the other troops in the small multi-national "Peace-Keeping Force" can achieve goals is not compatible with the hard and discouraging facts of Lebanese political life.

I will be joining with like-minded Members of Congress in the next few days to try to bring major Congressional pressure on the Administration. We are prepared to press for a complete cutoff of funding for our operations in Lebanon if the President resists our efforts to alter current policy.

We will be seeking an orderly, but swift pull-out of the Marines unless we see rapid and substantial movement on several fronts:

First, we will insist that the Marines be removed from the Beirut airport installation. There can be no justification for gratuitously exposing our men to additional casualties.

Second, we will demand that the Administration indicate in detail, specifically and precisely, what the mission of the Marine contingent is. We want to know how long it will take to accomplish this mission.

.....MORE.....MORE.....MORE.....

We also want to know in advance the precise circumstances under which the President will concede that his policy has failed, and that the Marines must be withdrawn.

Third, I feel especially strongly about America's right to expect immediate and substantial signs of flexibility from the government of Lebanese President Amin Gemayel. There can be no possible justification for American support for the Gemayel regime unless it makes ample room in its national power structure for the various groups that compose the Muslim majority.

I will not be placated by mere presidential rhetoric. Nor will I be satisfied by presidential sentiment. President Reagan is an eloquent speaker and a person whose basic sincerity I do not question. Surely, he would like to bring peace to Lebanon and stem the influence of Syria and the Soviet Union in the region. These issues do not divide us. The division is over whether or not this Administration has a military and diplomatic policy likely to achieve the ends we all desire.

Men must often die in war to achieve peace. Soldiers must obey their civilian Commander in Chief. However, at this critical juncture in our nation's history, we must remember the central lesson of Vietnam: disaster of cataclysmic proportion can strike if the Congress and the American people waive their right to play a major role in the formulation of foreign policy.

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